

CBC  
MASKED RAIDER  
No 3

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AUTHORITY

# MASKED RAIDER

A CHARLTON PUBLICATION

And 'TALON' the  
Golden Eagle

10¢

STAN  
CAMPBELL







WEB COMIC  
UNIVERSE.COM



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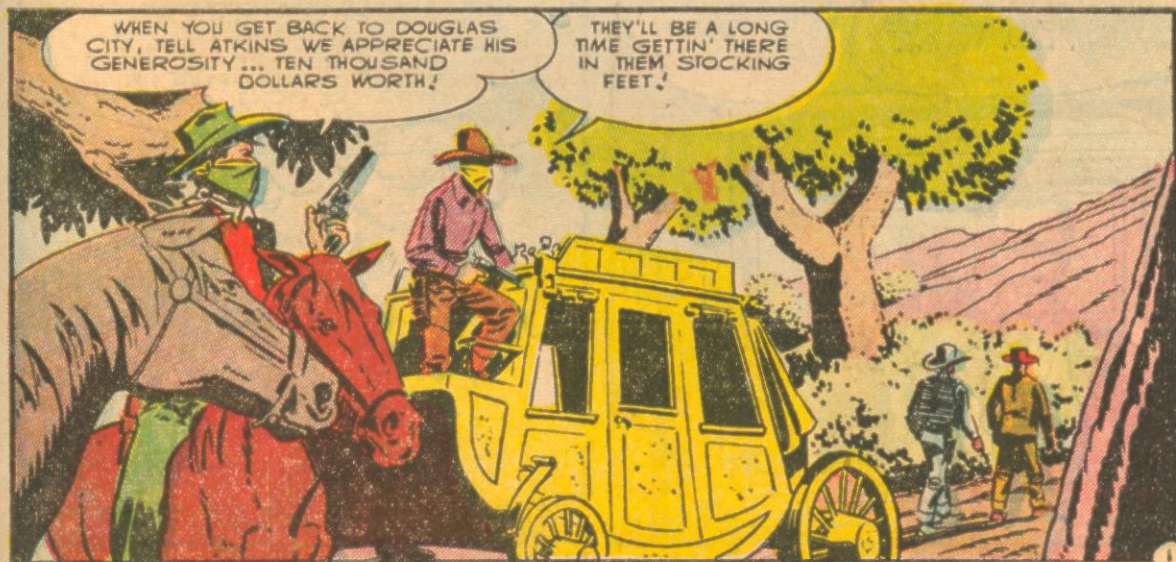
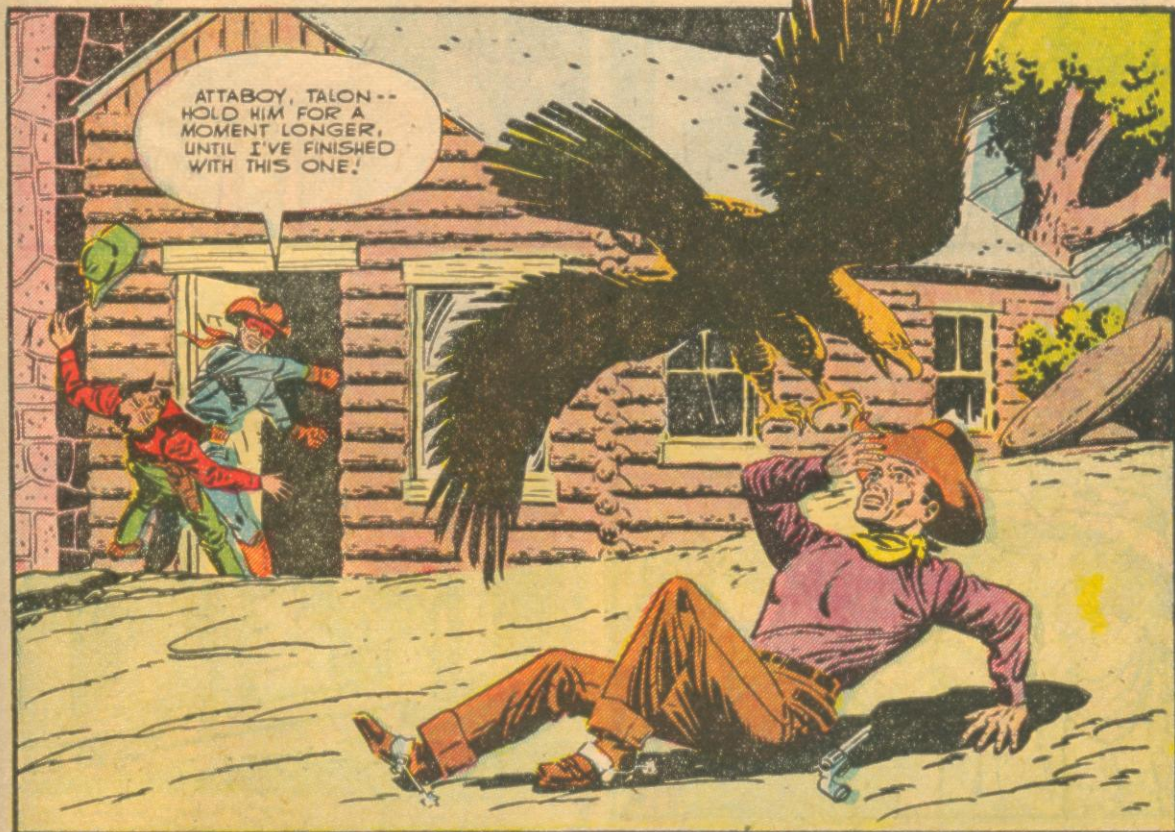
# MASKED RAIDER

A MISSING GOLD SHIPMENT ABOARD A MISSING STAGE COACH PAINTED GOLD, PRESENT A BAFFLING MYSTERY TO THE SHERIFF OF DOUGLAS CITY...UNTIL HELP ARRIVES IN THE FORM OF THE OLD WEST'S MOST UNUSUAL PAIR OF CRIME FIGHTERS... THE....

## MASKED RAIDER

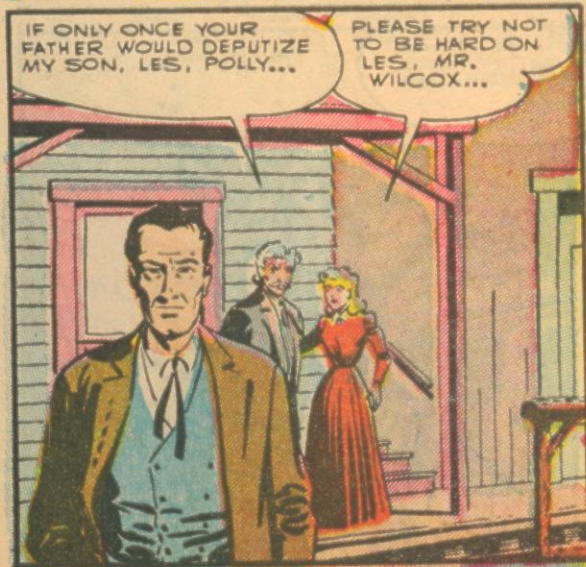
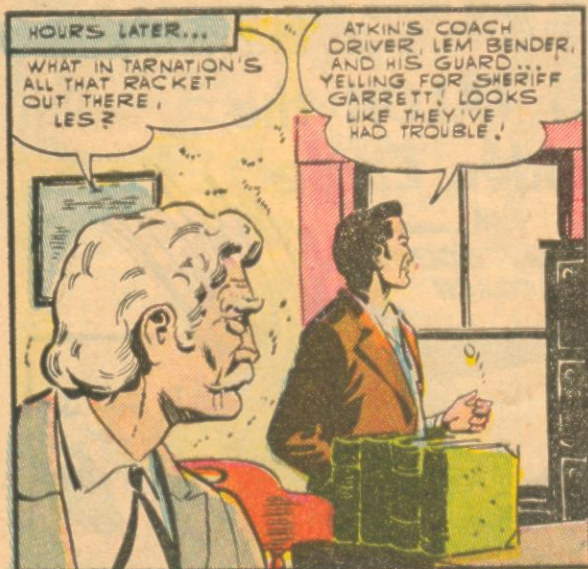
And 'TALON' the  
Golden Eagle

in  
THE GOLDEN  
COACH





# MASKED RAIDER





# MASKED RAIDER

MEANWHILE THE TWO OUTLAWS ARE EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES OF THEIR OWN...



THERE'S NO WAY OF CARRYIN' ALL THEM SACKS OF DUST ON TWO HORSES! WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE WHAT WE CAN AND LEAVE THE REST!

NOW THAT'S WHY THEY PACKED THE DUST THIS WAY INSTEAD OF ALL IN ONE BIG BOX! THEY FIGURED THAT IN CASE OF A STICK-UP BY ONE OR TWO MEN, IT'D BE IMPOSSIBLE TO MOVE ALL THE SACKS AT ONCE!



BUT IT AIN'T GONNA WORK THAT EASY! WE'VE GOT TO MOVE THIS GOLD TO A SAFE HIDING PLACE AND THEN GET RID OF THIS COACH-- AND I KNOW HOW TO DO BOTH!



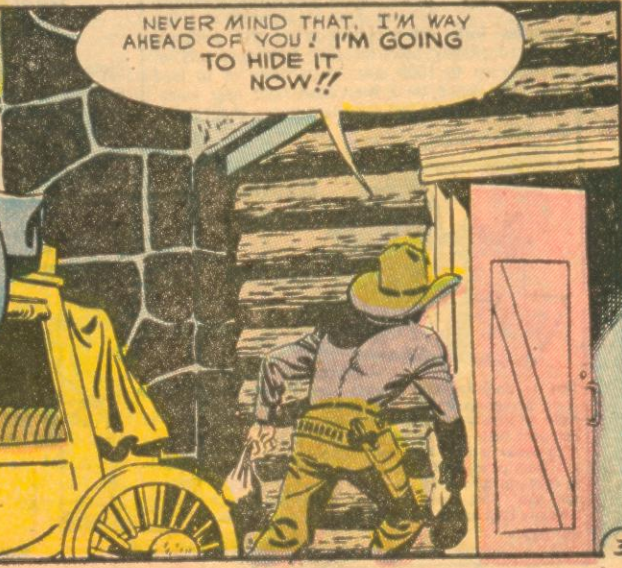
ONE OF ATKIN'S GOLD COACHES... SAY, YOU FELLERS ARE A LITTLE OFF YOUR COURSE, AIN'T YOU?



THERE... THAT'LL QUIET YOU DOWN FOR A WHILE, OLD TIMER! GET THAT GOLD HID... QUICK!



NEVER MIND THAT, I'M WAY AHEAD OF YOU! I'M GOING TO HIDE IT NOW!!









# MASKED RAIDER



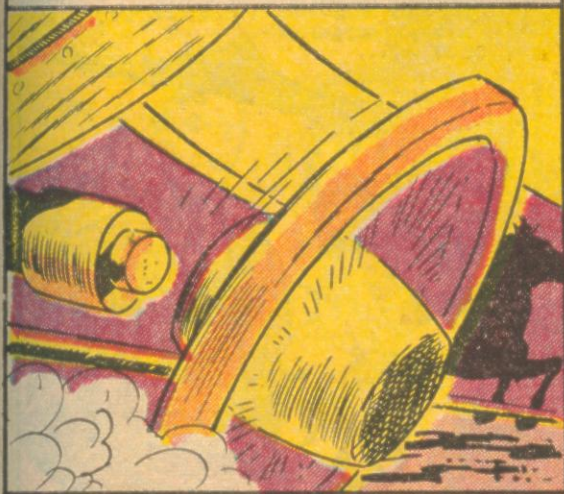
AS THE COACH STARTS DOWN THE HILL, SHERIFF GARRETT AND HIS POSSE ROUND THE CURVE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE ROAD...

WHOA! THERE'S THE STAGE NOW! LOOK! OLD MAN OAKERSON IS ON IT!

AT A DEAD GALLOP! HE'LL NEVER MAKE IT! HE'S TRYING TO JUMP!

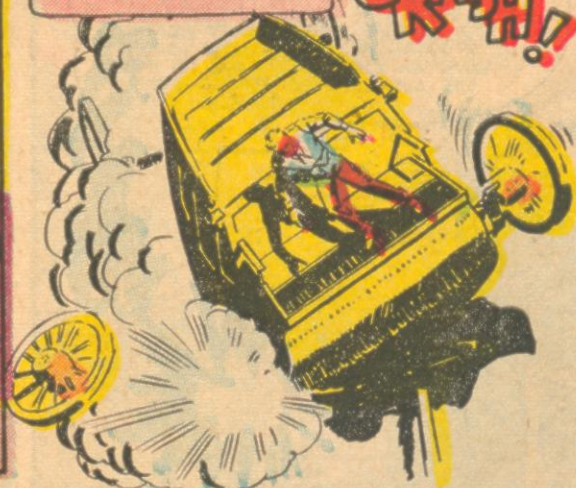


BUT THE OLD MAN NEVER HAS A CHANCE TO LEAP FREE--- FOR AT THAT MOMENT---



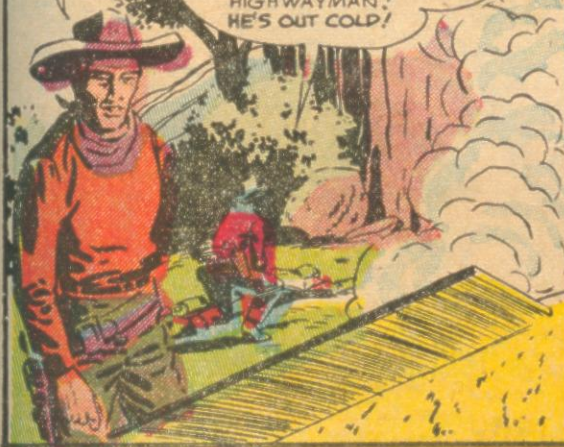
--THE WHEEL COMES OFF AND HE IS THROWN TO THE GROUND---

**CRASH!!**



NO SIGN OF THE GOLD, SHERIFF!

COURSE NOT! HE HAD PLENTY OF TIME TO HIDE IT! FUNNY... I'D NEVER HAVE TAKEN OLD MAN OAKERSON FOR A HIGHWAYMAN! HE'S OUT COLD!



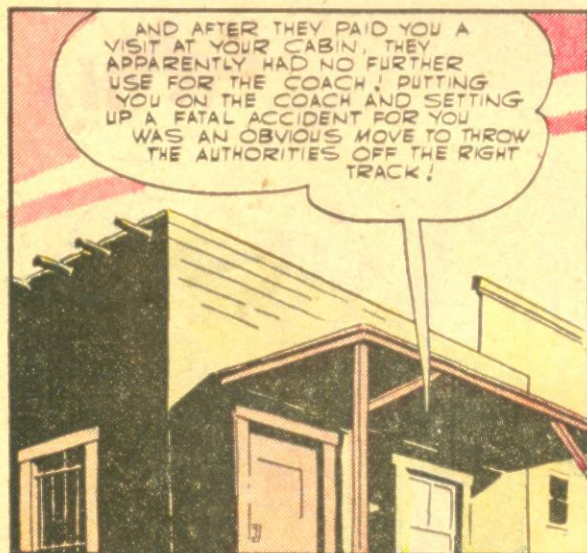
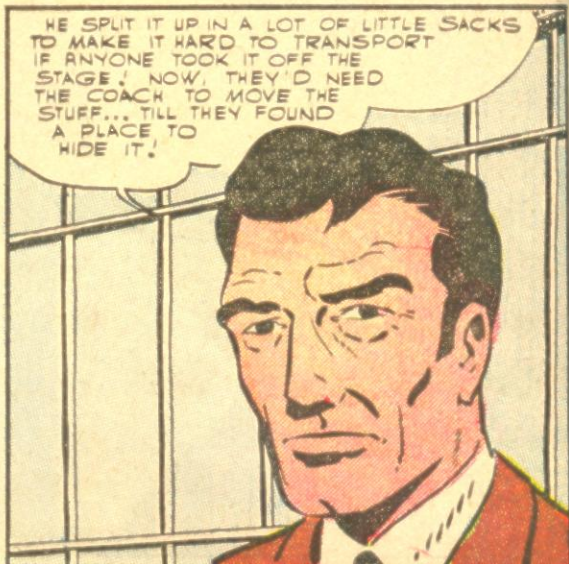
OLD MAN OAKERSON! THAT'S HARD TO BELIEVE, SHERIFF!

YEP! IT WAS FOR US, TOO! BUT WE CAUGHT HIM DRIVING THE STAGE, AND HE'D HAD TIME TO HIDE THE GOLD! ANYWAY, HE WANTS TO SEE YOU, WILCOX!





# MASKED RAIDER



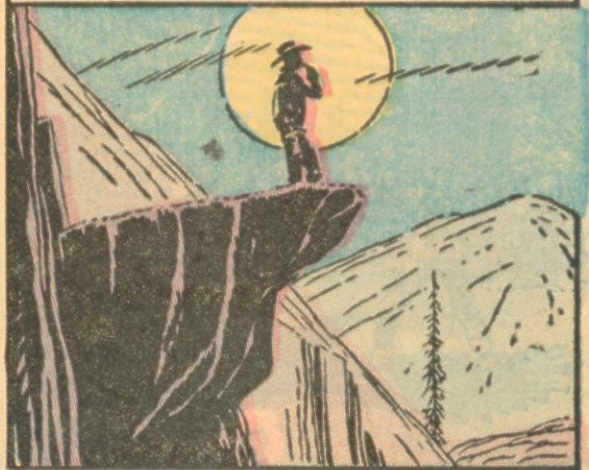


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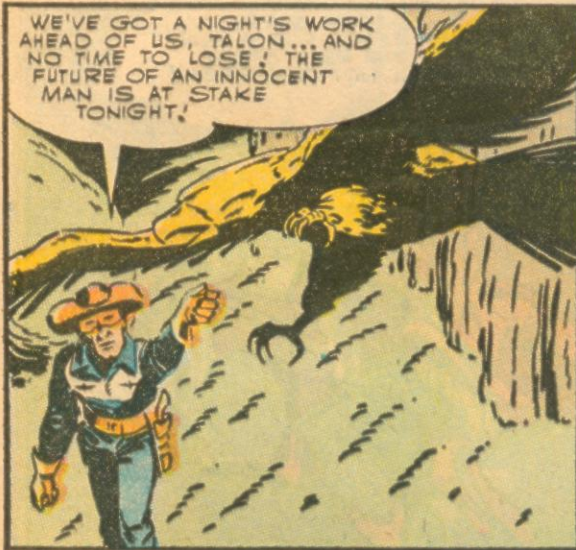
A SHORT TIME LATER, FROM THE SECRET CAVE IN THE HILLS, APPEARS THE FIGURE OF A MAN WHO STRIKES TERROR TO THE HEARTS OF THE WEST'S BOLDEST OUTLAWS... THE MASKED RAIDER...



MOMENTS LATER, FROM A ROCKY CREST ABOVE THE CAVE, THE FABULOUS GUN-FIGHTER WHISTLES A SIGNAL INTO THE DARKENING SKIES...



WE'VE GOT A NIGHT'S WORK AHEAD OF US, TALON... AND NO TIME TO LOSE! THE FUTURE OF AN INNOCENT MAN IS AT STAKE TONIGHT!

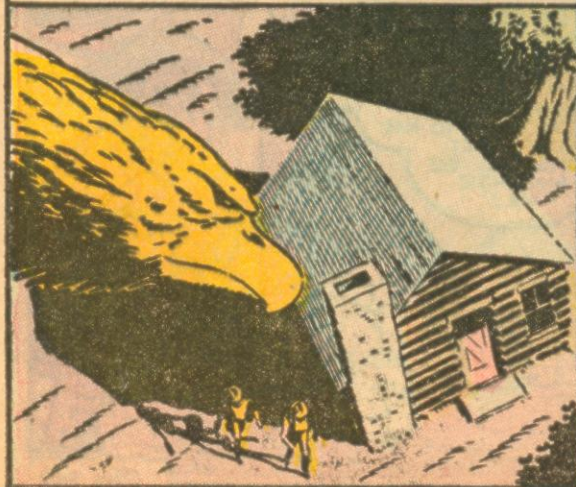


MIGHTY OBLIGING OF GARRETT TO LOCK UP THE OLD MAN AND GIVE US THE RUN OF THE PLACE TONIGHT!

SURE WAS! BY MORNING WE'LL HAVE THE GOLD STASHED AWAY WHERE THEY'LL NEVER THINK OF LOOKING!

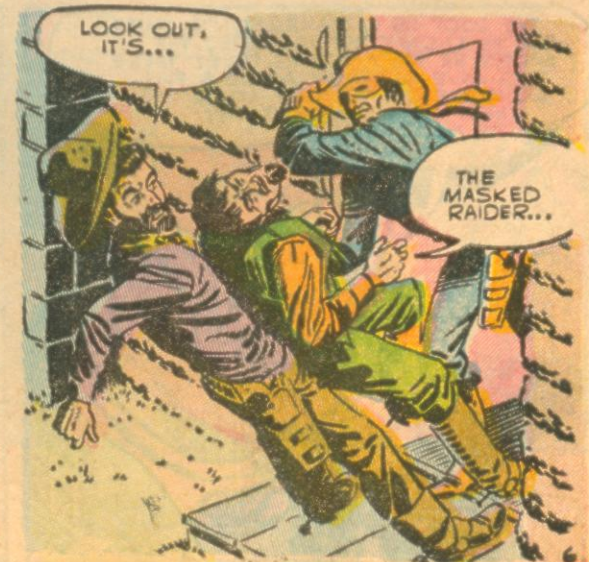


AS THE OUTLAWS ENTER THE OLD MAN'S CABIN, THEY FAIL TO HEAR THE SLIGHT SWISH OF HUGE WINGS HIGH ABOVE THEM...



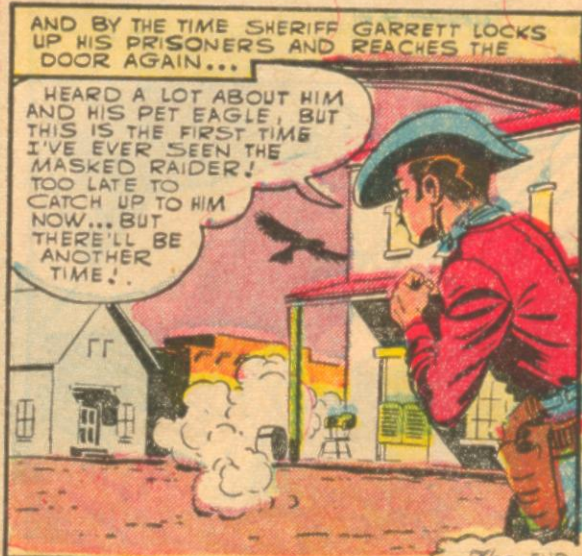
LOOK OUT, IT'S...

THE MASKED RAIDER...





# MASKED RAIDER



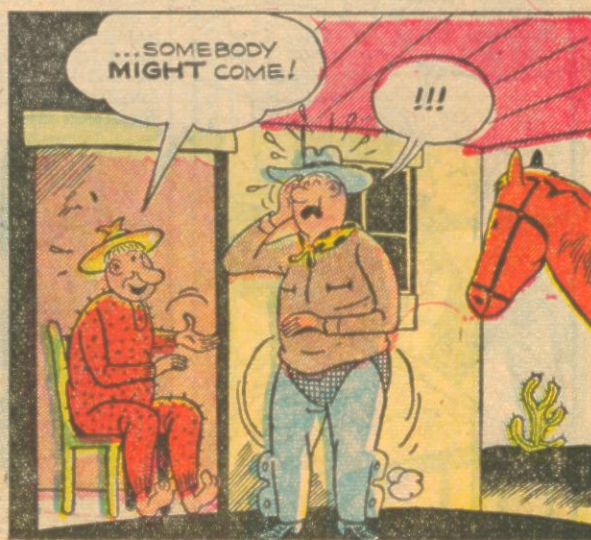
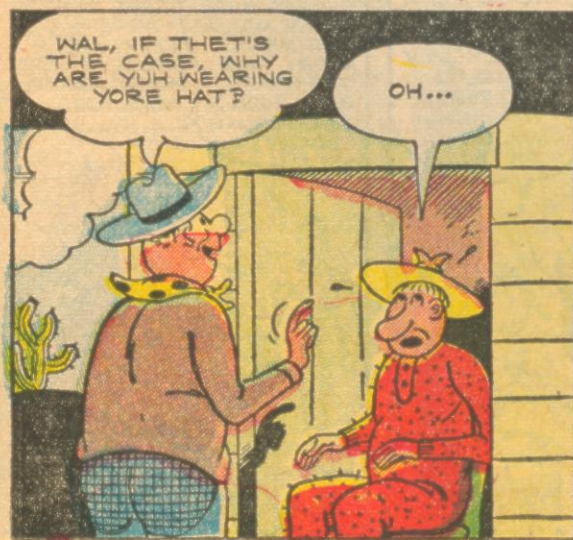
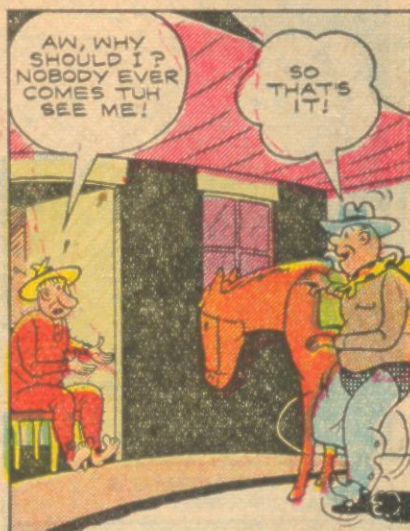
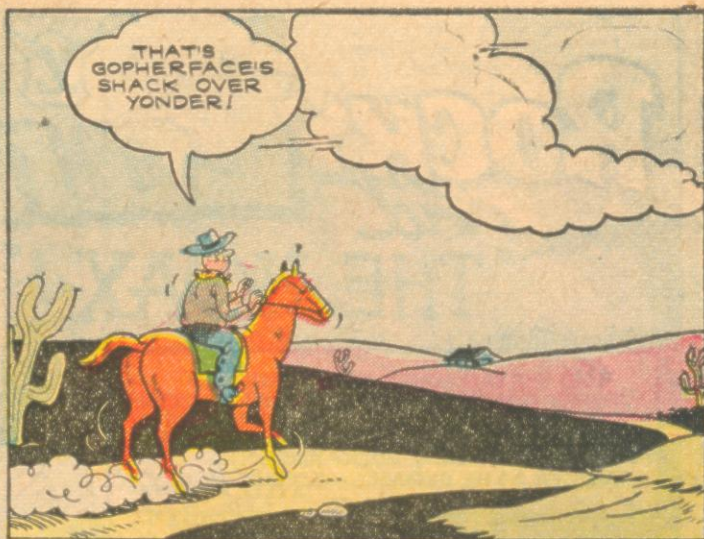
The END



## MASKED RAIDER

# gopher- face

THE MAD HATTER!





# MASKED RAIDER

## Rocky Lane and "THE HOAX!"

**D**ID THE OLD HOUSE, NAILED SHUT AND TIGHTLY BOARDED UP, CONTAIN JUST AN ECCENTRIC SOURDOUGH PLAYING A MACABRE JOKE ON THE WORLD? OR WAS THERE REALLY A CRIMINAL POSED TO STRIKE? ROCKY FINDS THE ANSWER AS HE EXPOSES... "THE HOAX!"



**A**T THE CHIEF MARSHAL'S HEADQUARTERS ---

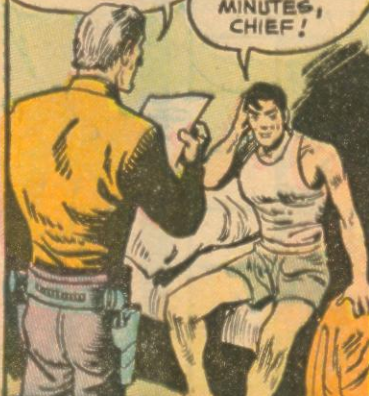
WAKE UP, ROCKY!  
RISE AND SHINE!  
THERE'S WORK  
TO DO!

EH...? OH,  
WHAT'S UP,  
CHIEF!



SORRY TO BREAK UP YOUR SLEEP, ROCKY, BUT THIS LETTER JUST CAME FROM A RANCHER NAMED BENTON UP IN REDWOOD COUNTY! HE ASKS FOR IMMEDIATE AID, SAYS HE'S GOING TO BE HARMED UNLESS HE GETS PROTECTION!

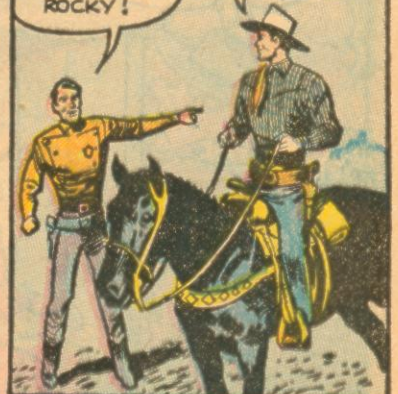
I'LL HAVE  
BLACK JACK  
SADDLED  
AND READY  
IN A FEW  
MINUTES,  
CHIEF!



**S**OON AFTER--

BENTON WROTE THAT HIS PLACE IS FIVE MILES PAST MESA RIVER! TAKE THE FIRST RIGHT TURN! GOOD LUCK, ROCKY!

RIGHT, CHIEF!  
BLACK JACK  
AND I'LL DO OUR  
BEST TO GET  
THERE IN A  
HURRY AND  
GIVE BENTON THE  
PROTECTION HE  
ASKS FOR!

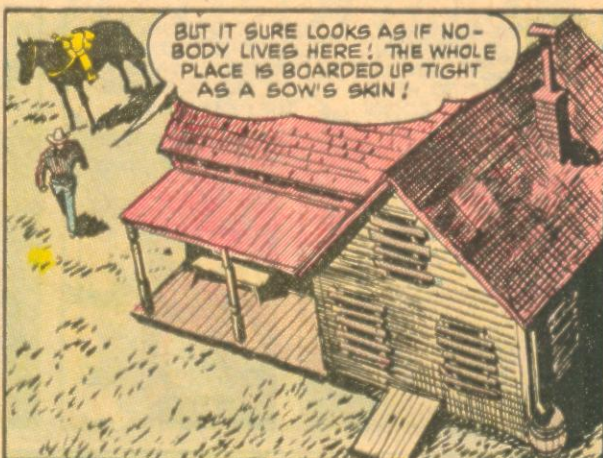
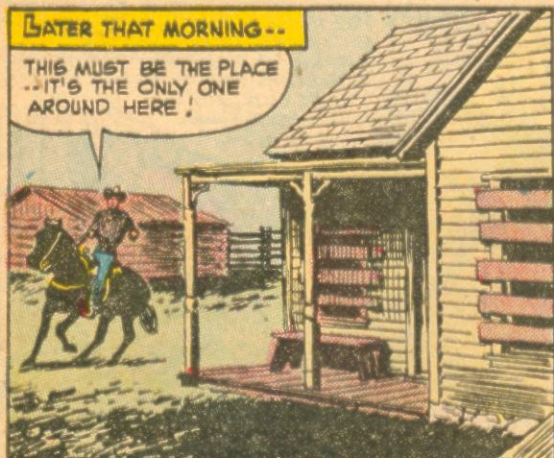




# MASKED RAIDER

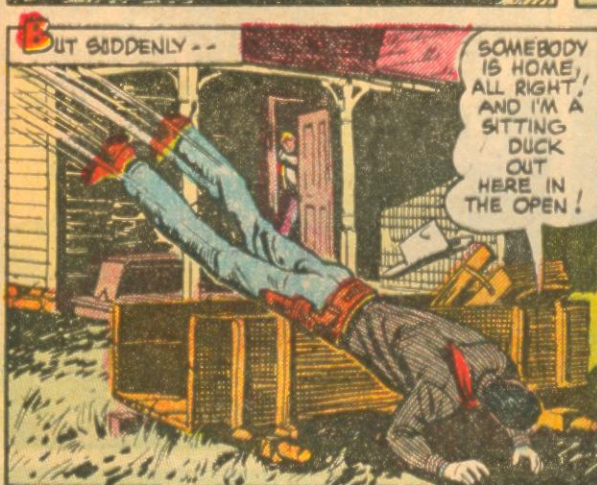
LATER THAT MORNING--

THIS MUST BE THE PLACE--  
--IT'S THE ONLY ONE  
AROUND HERE!



BUT IT SURE LOOKS AS IF NO-  
BODY LIVES HERE! THE WHOLE  
PLACE IS BOARDED UP TIGHT  
AS A SOW'S SKIN!

BUT SUDDENLY--



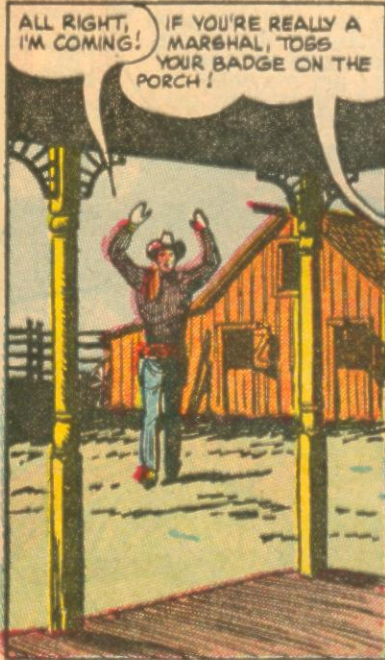
SOMEBODY  
IS HOME!  
ALL RIGHT,  
AND I'M A  
SITTING  
DUCK  
OUT  
HERE IN  
THE OPEN!

HEY, THERE--  
HOLD YOUR  
FIRE! I'M  
FROM THE  
MARSHAL'S  
OFFICE!

YOU ARE, EH? WAL, I'M NOT FALLIN'  
FOR ANY TRICKS! YOU'LL HAVE TO  
PROVE THET! STAND UP AND WALK  
THIS WAY WITH YOUR HANDS UP!

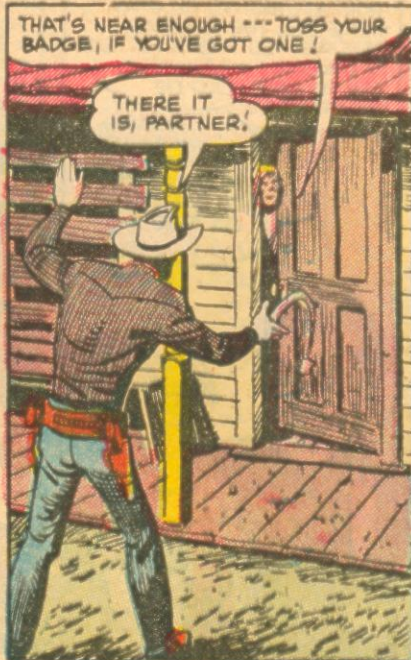


ALL RIGHT, I'M COMING!  
IF YOU'RE REALLY A  
MARSHAL, TOSS  
YOUR BADGE ON THE  
PORCH!



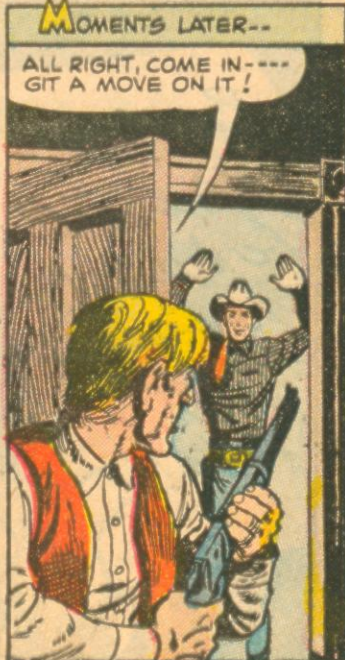
THAT'S NEAR ENOUGH --- TOSS YOUR  
BADGE, IF YOU'VE GOT ONE!

THERE IT  
IS, PARTNER!



MOMENTS LATER--

ALL RIGHT, COME IN---  
GIT A MOVE ON IT!





# MASKED RAIDER



YOU'RE BENTON, I TAKE IT, THE MAN WHO SENT THAT LETTER FOR HELP TO HEAD-QUARTERS! ROCKY LANE'S MY NAME!

YEP, I'M BENTON, BUT DON'T STAND IN THE DOORWAY GABBIN'! GIT INSIDE AFORE THEY GIT ME!



ALL RIGHT, FRIEND --JUST TAKE IT EASY! WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?

FER MONTHS AND MONTHS I'VE BEEN GITTING LETTERS NEAR EVERY DAY, SAYING I'M A-GOING TO BE HARMED! SOMEONE WANTS TO GET ME SO'S THEY CAN BUY THE VALUABLE LAND I OWN!

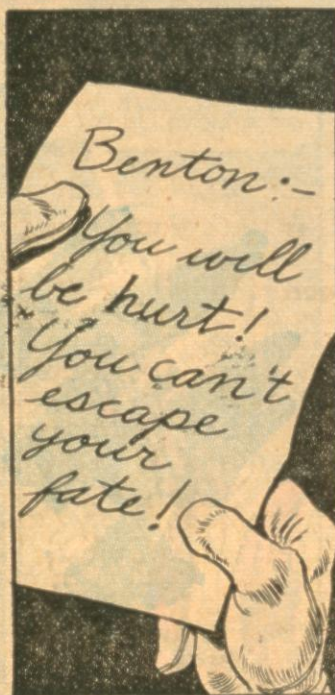


I--I DON'T DARE GO OUT! I STOCKED ALL THE CANNED FOOD, BUT I'M RUNNING LOW NOW! THAT'S WHY I SENT FER A MARSHAL! I NEED PROTECTION!



HERE, MARSHAL ---HERE'S ONE O' THE LETTERS I GOT YESTERDAY! I--I CAN'T TAKE MUCH MORE! I'M TOO NERVOUS NOW!

YOU'RE TELLING ME!



Benton:--  
You will be hurt!  
You can't escape your fate!



I RECKON YOU NEED PROTECTION, ALL RIGHT! I'LL STAY HERE TILL THE HOMBRE SENDING YOU THESE LETTERS IS CAUGHT! MEANWHILE, TRY TO GET HOLD OF YOURSELF!

THANKS, MARSHAL! I'LL TRY. I'VE AN EXTRA COT! YOU CAN SLEEP ON THAT!

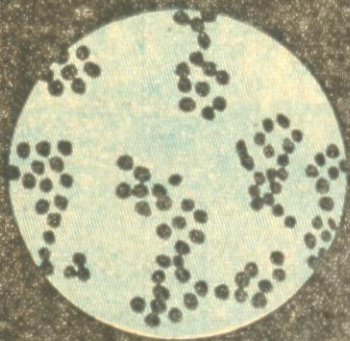


LATER, THAT NIGHT---

POOR BENTON! HE'S SUCH A BUNDLE OF NERVES HE EVEN SLEEPS WITH HIS RIFLE! BUT IT'S BEEN MIGHTY QUIET ALL NIGHT!



# KILL THESE HAIR-DESTROYING GERMS



Staphylococcus albus



Corynebacterium acnes



Pityrosporum ovale

# SAVE YOUR HAIR

Beware of your itchy scalp, hair loss, dandruff, head scales, unpleasant head odors! Nature may be warning you of approaching baldness. Heed Nature's warning! Treat your scalp to scientifically prepared Ward's Formula.

Millions of trouble-breeding bacteria, living on your sick scalp (see above) are killed on contact. Ward's Formula kills not one, but *all 3* types of these destructive scalp germs now recognized by many medical authorities as a significant cause of baldness. Kill these germs—don't risk letting them kill your hair growth.

## ENJOY THESE 5 BENEFITS IMMEDIATELY

1. Kills germs that retard normal hair growth—*on contact*
2. Removes ugly infectious dandruff—*fast*
3. Brings hair-nourishing blood to scalp—*quickly*
4. Stops annoying scalp itch and burn—*instantly*
5. Starts wonderful self-massaging action—*within 3 seconds*

Once you're bald, that's *it*, friends! There's nothing you can do. Your hair is gone forever. So are your chances of getting it back. But Ward's Formula, used as directed, keeps your sick scalp free of itchy dandruff, seborrhea, and stops the hair loss they cause. Almost at once your hair looks thicker, more attractive and alive.

We don't ask you to believe *us*. Thousands of men and women—first skeptical just as you are—have *proved* what we say. Here's our **GUARANTEE**. Try Ward's Formula in your own home for only 10 days. You must enjoy *all* the benefits we claim—or we return *not only* the price you pay—but **DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK** on return of unused portion. You are the judge. Send no money. Pay postman only \$2 plus a few cents postage, or save postage by sending \$2 with order. **ACT NOW TO SAVE YOUR HAIR. SEND COUPON TODAY!**

WARD LABORATORIES, Dept. 6607-B

19 West 44th St. New York 36, N. Y.

Name

Address

City  Zone  State

☐ I enclose \$2.00, send prepaid

☐ Send C.O.D., I will pay \$2.00 plus postage

# DOUBLE MONEY BACK GUARANTEE



# MASKED RAIDER

THE NIGHT'S NEAR OVER  
AND THERE HASN'T BEEN  
A SIGN OF ANYONE  
GUNNING FOR BENTON---  
-- (YAWN)!



AND WHEN MORNING COMES ---

I'VE BEEN THINKING, BENTON, THAT  
SINCE THE VARMINT DIDN'T SHOW UP  
LAST NIGHT, I'LL GO INTO TOWN TO  
TRY TO GET A  
LEAD ON HIM! IT'S  
THE ONLY WAY TO  
GET AT THE BOTTOM  
OF THIS!



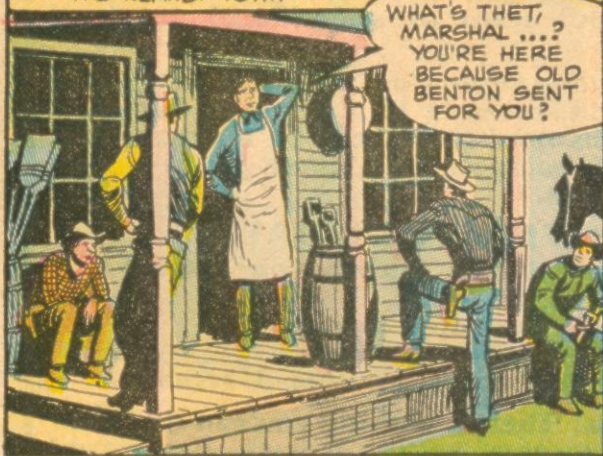
YOU--- YOU  
MEAN YOU'RE  
A-GOING TO  
LEAVE ME  
ALONE,  
MARSHAL?

BUT  
YOU'LL  
COME  
BACK,  
MARSHAL  
-----  
PROMISE  
ME!

I'LL COME BACK, BENTON!  
YOU'LL BE SAFE SO LONG  
AS YOU STAY IN HERE!  
NOBODY COULD GET IN  
THE WAY YOU HAVE THE  
PLACE BOARDED UP!



**B**UT LATER, WHEN ROCKY MENTIONS BENTON IN  
THE NEARBY TOWN ---



WHAT'S THE?,  
MARSHAL...?  
YOU'RE HERE  
BECAUSE OLD  
BENTON SENT  
FOR YOU?

HEY, BOYS --- DID YOU ---  
HO-HO --- HEAR THE? ...?  
BENTON'S ASKED THE  
MARSHAL'S OFFICE FER  
PROTECTION --- HO-HO-  
HO!



?

HA-HA-  
HA!

HAW-  
HAW!

WHAT'S SO FUNNY  
ABOUT A CRIMINAL  
SENDING A MAN  
WARNING  
LETTERS?

HAW-HAW --- YOU TELL HIM, JED!  
HAW-HAW! HE FOOLED THE  
MARSHAL'S OFFICE!

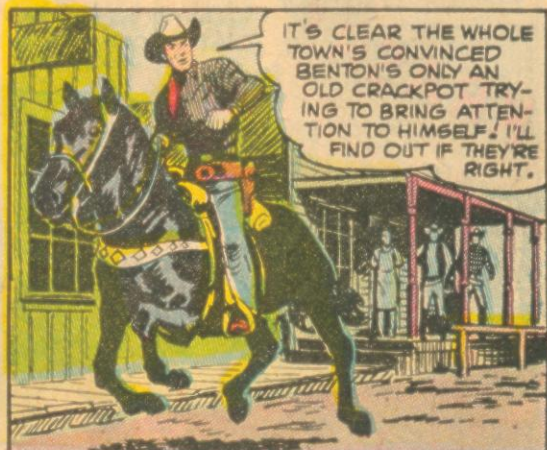
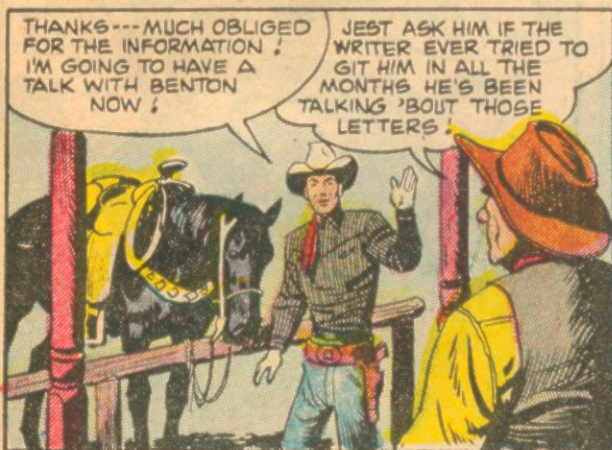
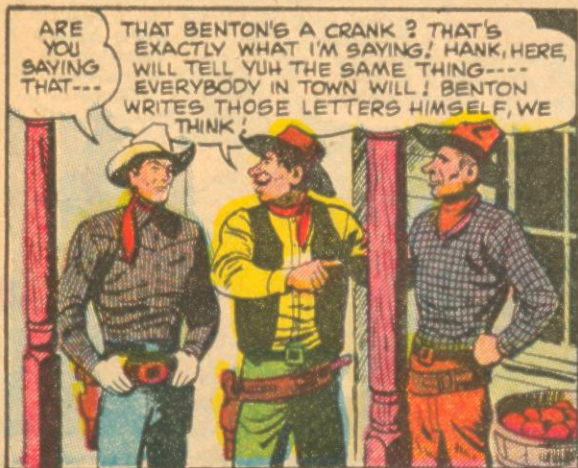


MARSHAL, BENTON'S BEEN SAYING THE  
SAME THING 'BOUT THOSE LETTERS FOR  
MONTHS NOW! HE'S HAD EVERYBODY IN  
TOWN UP THERE PROTECTING HIM AT ONE  
TIME OR ANOTHER!



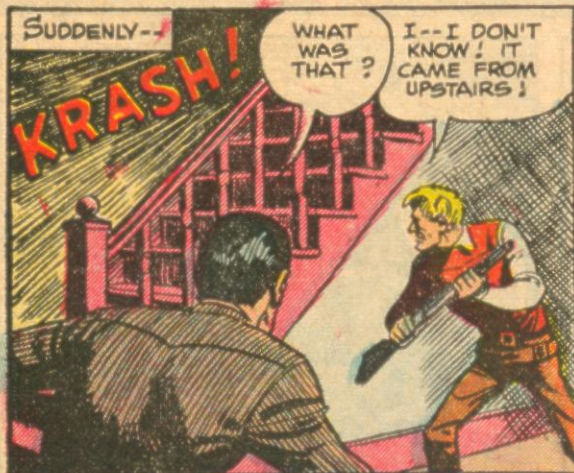


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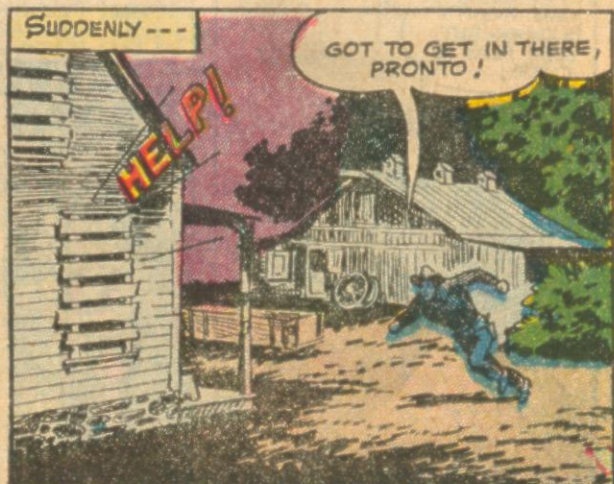
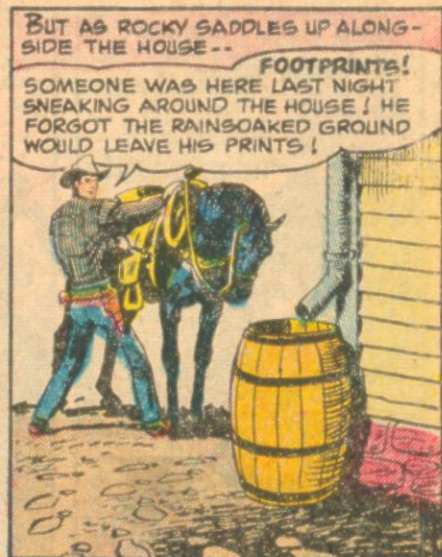


# MASKED RAIDER





# MASKED RAIDER





# MASKED RAIDER



I NOTICED THE BOARDS OVER THIS WINDOW ARE LIGHTER THAN THE OTHERS! HERE GOES!



AND NOT ANY TOO SOON, I'D SAY!



A SECRET DOOR BUILT IN THE WALL AT THE BACK OF THE HOUSE! SO, THAT'S HOW THE VAR-MINTS GOT IN WITHOUT MY SEEING THEM!



AND LATER, AFTER THE VAR-MINTS ARE SAFE IN JAIL ---

SO FREEMAN DISCOVERED THE SECRET DOOR IN MY HOUSE I NEVER KNEW ABOUT FROM A SET OF OLD PLANS HE FOUND BEFORE I BOUGHT THE PLACE! THEN HE AND HIS PARTNER STARTED THEIR PLAN TO DO ME IN AND TAKE OVER MY LAND!

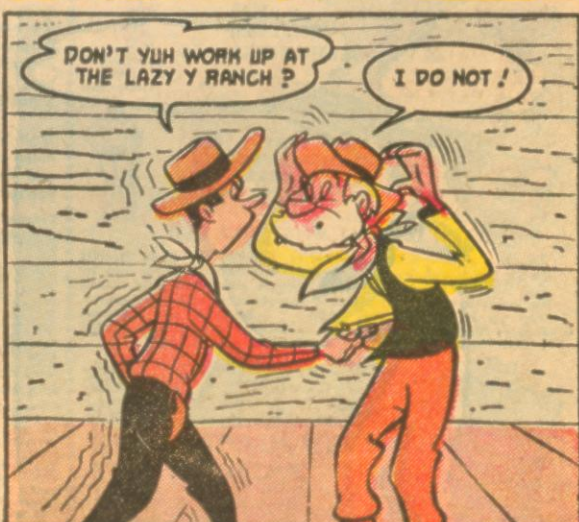


WHEN THEY RECKONED THIS WAS SET IN PEOPLE'S MINDS, THEY ENTERED BY THE SECRET DOOR TO GET YOU WITH YOUR OWN GUN SO FOLKS'D NATURALLY FIGURE YOU'D DONE YOURSELF IN!





# MASKED RAIDER





# How 'BLACK BEAUTY' TURNS AN ALSO-RAN INTO VIDEO VIC!



## FREE DEVELOP REAL POWER INCREASE YOUR STRENGTH • BUILD YOUR BODY

### BECOME AN ALL-AROUND WINNER

**FREE**  
WITH EVERY COURSE  
**NEW 5-CABLE**  
**BLACK BEAUTY**  
PROGRESSIVE EXERCISER  
HEAVY DUTY

**YOUR MONEY BACK**  
IF NOT SATISFIED

**SENT WITH EVERY COURSE FREE**

**LOOK AT WHAT YOU GET!**

This big action-packed 'Power-Plus' Cable Course is literally packed with dynamite... every word batted out for you by Joe Bonomo himself. Many of today's strongmen paid \$25.00 for these same instructions as a personalized mail order course. You get it now for only \$4.95... including Joe Bonomo's famous 'Black Beauty' Progressive 5-Cable Exerciser as a FREE gift to you. Don't wait! Act RIGHT AWAY!

**WIN FRIENDS • GAIN POPULARITY • BE A SUCCESS**

**JOE BONOMO SHOWS YOU HOW!**

Why grope in the dark wishing? Why let other guys run off with your best girl... steal that promotion from you... take away that position on the team? Now, in the amazing new 'Black-Beauty' 5-Cable Progressive Exerciser and Joe Bonomo's personal instruction 'Power-Plus' method you, too, can become an all-around winner!

**SCIENTIFIC! AND HOW!**

Wait 'til you see what fast progress you make to real power with 'Black Beauty' and Joe Bonomo. They're with you 'til you're 'TOPS' in the field.

Bernarr Macfadden says:

"As an instructor in muscle building, you should stand at the head of the list. Many of your pupils already attest to your ability in building better bodies. I can recommend you most highly. Here's wishing you all possible success!"

Jack Dempsey says:

"I consider your 'Power-Plus' Course... tops for all-around physical development... power, strength... endurance. The secrets and short cuts you reveal with your system of body development are miraculous and I cannot endorse your course too highly."

**COMPLETE 'POWER-PLUS' CABLE COURSE**

**\$4.95** including 'BLACK BEAUTY' 5 CABLE EXERCISER FREE! (Worth \$9.95 alone)

**CUT OUT THE DREAMING!**

Strongmen think fast... act fast! Now that you've made up your mind... do something about it quickly! Get going! Send your order in right away!

**ACT NOW FOR FREE OFFER**

**STRONGMEN'S CLUB OF AMERICA**

Joe Bonomo, Director  
1841 Broadway, Dept. C78  
New York 23, New York

Okay, Joe! Rush me your 'Power-Plus' Cable Course including, FREE of any additional charge, your new 'Black Beauty' 5-Cable Progressive Exerciser. I'll try the 'Power-Plus' Bonomo method for 2 weeks. If I am not 100% satisfied I can return it for an immediate refund.

☐ I enclose \$4.95 in ☐ check, ☐ money order, ☐ cash.  
Send C.O.D. for \$4.95 plus shipping charges.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE PRINT PLAINLY  
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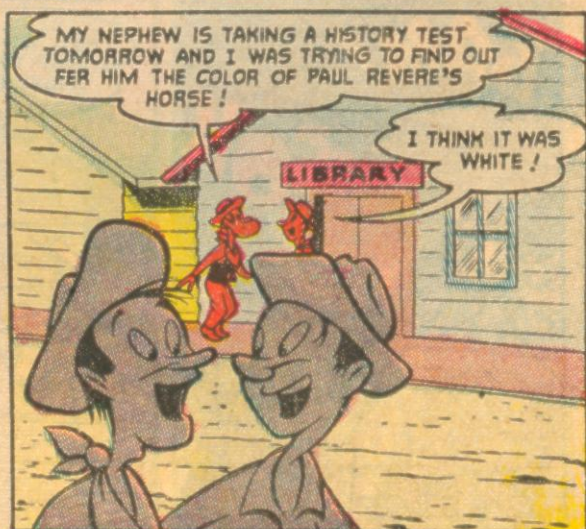
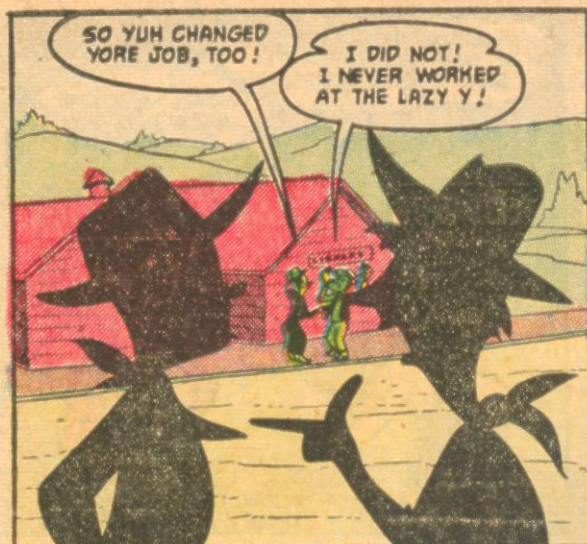
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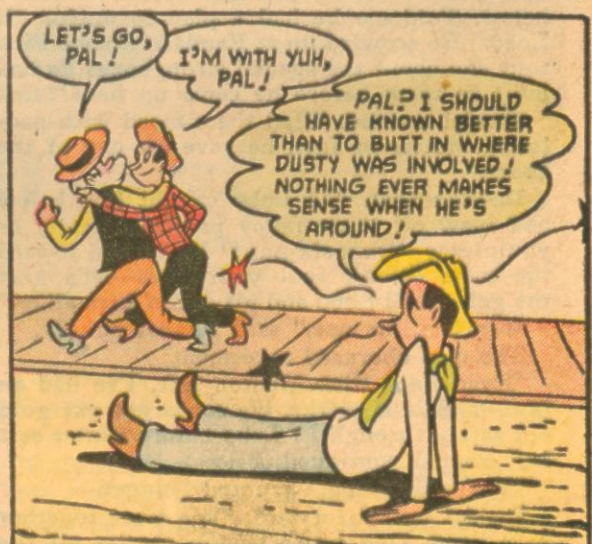
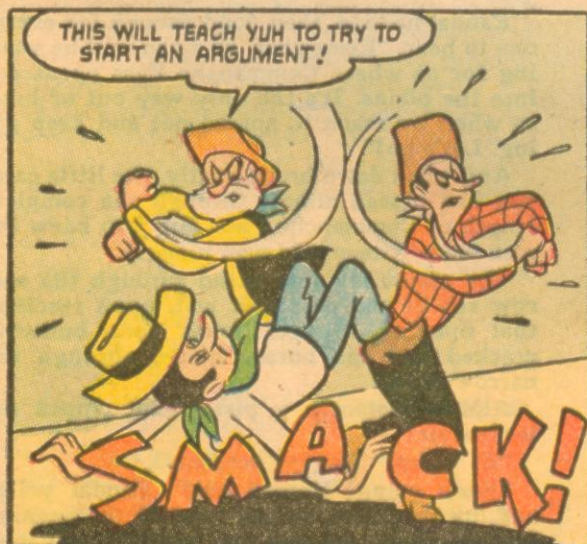


# MASKED RAIDER





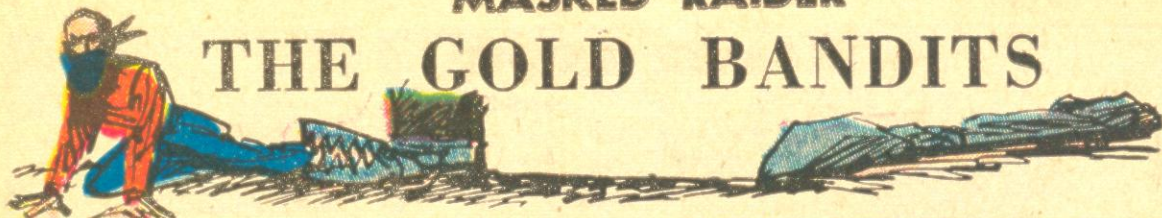
# MASKED RAIDER





## MASKED RAIDER

# THE GOLD BANDITS



**B**IG Jim Randal stood spraddle-legged before the warm crackling flames of the campfire and thrust his tight-clenched fists deeper into his mackinaw pockets. Flinty-eyed, he studied the grim faces of the six men in a rough semi-circle before him.

"We stayed in these hills too long," he said, his weather-lined face serious. "El Lobo and his gang of gold thieves have the only pass out of here bottled up."

A cold night wind swept down out of the hills, and banks of leaden snow clouds hid the moon. The breath of winter had come with icy suddenness to warn the handful of prospectors who still roamed these hills, searching, blasting into bedrock for the valuable yellow metal. The diehards.

"We'll freeze to death when the blizzards hit," shivered grizzled Nugget Jones.

"We're the last men up here," Randal said. "And El Lobo's waiting below like a vulture for us to come out—so he can steal our gold!"

A heavy-set prospector shook his head. "After all that slavin' and diggin' and blastin' this past summer?"

"We got no choice," Nugget Jones chirped. "Either we stay here with our gold and freeze to death, or we ride down and make that coyote, El Lobo, a present of it . . ."

"Unless we could trick him," interrupted Randal.

"Trick El Lobo? You're batty, Randal," cut in hatchet-faced Slim Dawson. "Old Pick Manton tried and lost. Only last week he left for below. Told me he had a plan to outfox El Lobo." He scowled up at Randal. "Mebbe Pick told you about the special strongboxes he had built in town before he came up here?"

Randal nodded. "Had them fitted with padlocks. Matter of fact, he gave me one of the boxes."

Dawson spat. "El Lobo caught him below and blew off those fancy padlocks neatly as you please with a six-gun!" He turned toward the men. "Don't fool yourselves—let's give the gold to El Lobo and git out of here alive!"

"Not me, for one," said Randal quietly.

The men chorused agreement.

"Ever since Pick Manton left, I've had an idea—and if it works, we could get our gold out safely through El Lobo before winter sets in," Randal continued.

"We're listening," grunted Nugget.

Randal leaned forward. "We leave together in a band. One man's wagon carries all the

gold. El Lobo wouldn't have time to nab more than three of us and, while he's doing that, the guy with the gold gets away."

"Sounds good," said the heavy-set prospector. "But supposing El Lobo nabs the man carrying the gold?"

"He'll have to get away while El Lobo's chasing the others. Besides," Randal drawled, "we'll have the advantage because El Lobo will never suspect that only one of us has the paydirt. Loaded, our wagons all look the same."

Nugget's head shook. "Big risk for the guy carrying the yellow stuff."

"I'll make the run, if you men trust me," Randal said.

There was a brief buzz of excitement and, finally, the men agreed.

"It's our only chance," Randal told them finally. "Bring all your gold to me. Pack your equipment on your wagons and be ready to leave an hour before dawn."

An hour before dawn, Big Jim had just finished lashing his last remaining box of blasting powder onto his wagon when the other prospectors arrived.

Nugget Jones gave him a lift with the heavy strongbox that Pick Manton had given him a few days earlier.

"Heavy!" grunted Jones. "But what's in that box represents a life's work for most of us, Jim."

Randal nodded, then, loud enough for everyone to hear, "Remember, El Lobo will be waiting for us where Commanche Pass opens out into the plains. It's the only way out of here, so when we reach it, spread out and keep going. Let's go!"

And when dawn broke finally, the little caravan had passed almost through the complete length of Commanche Pass. Big Jim knew the men were jittery. He was himself.

The plains lay just ahead through the narrow slit of the pass exit and, upon reaching that opening, Nugget Jones' long bullwhip cracked and his horses bolted through the narrow pass.

Almost instantly, a pistol shot ripped the leaden air!

"El Lobo!" Nugget screamed.

"Keep going! Spread out!" Randal yelled and, by this time, he had reached the opening himself. Then, he was out, heading pell mell



## MASKED RAIDER

for the plains ahead. Pistol and rifle shots whanged around him, over his head, thudded sharply into the wagon sides. But he kept on.

Up ahead, Jones' bouncing wagon veered sharply to the right. The heavy-set prospector veered left.

Then, from either side, horsemen sprang from behind big boulders and, with drawn guns, came thundering full tilt at Randal. Almost at once, the riders ignored the other prospectors.

Something had gone wrong! The plan *wasn't* going to work!

Brief seconds later, one of El Lobo's outlaws rode abreast of Randal's horses, seized the reins and pulled him to a halt. "Hola!" the outlaw shouted. "We have him, El Lobo!"

A huge Mexican dressed in buffalo robe and sombrero came riding up leisurely. Other outlaws, guns drawn, rode at his back. El Lobo looked closely at Big Jim, then at the strongbox lashed to the wagon. "Si, this is the one we want," he grumbled. His dark, beady eyes came back to Randal, lip curling. "So, your attempt to trick El Lobo is not so good, eh?"

Randal bristled with anger. "How'd you know I was the one carrying the gold?"

El Lobo chuckled. "The eyes and ears of El Lobo travel far." He turned abruptly and addressed his men. "Get that strongbox off and open it at once!"

"It's another one of those trick boxes with a padlock on it, like the one Manton had," spat one of the outlaws, grunting as he helped lift the box from Randal's wagon.

"Bah!" snarled the bandit chief, leaving a man to guard Randal. "When will these fools learn it does not pay to try tricks on El Lobo!" Deftly, he drew out his six-shooter and laid the muzzle flush against the padlock on the strongbox. "Watch!" he bellowed.

The outlaws gathered around their chief. El Lobo squeezed the trigger. The report was deafening. Bright orange flame spat against padlock and hasp, Lead smashed the metal with a loud snap.

But at that split second, the strongbox lid flew back violently on its hinges. A bright blinding flash of brilliant flame spewed up at the outlaws around it. There was a low, throaty rumble like thunder. Thick palls of black smoke burst out.

El Lobo and his men fell back screaming, clapping frantically at their eyes.

"Help!" gasped the bandit chief. "I-I can't see! I-I am blind! Help me!"

But the others were equally as helpless, fingers tearing at their flash-shocked eyes.

Instantly, Big Jim leaped off the wagon, knocked the startled outlaw who had been guarding him to the ground, scooped up his

six-gun and, pointing it skyward, triggered it three times.

When Nugget Jones, Slim Dawson, and the other prospectors returned to the scene, Randal had lined the blinded outlaws up against his wagon and had disarmed them.

Nugget Jones came over, wide-eyed. "Good thing you told me back at your camp to keep my ears open for three shots. B-but what in Sam Hill happened?" he sputtered.

El Lobo opened the wrong box, that's all," Randal commented quietly.

"We heard the explosion," Jones said, looking at the half-shattered strongbox. "Hey! What'd you have in there?"

"Flat shale rocks, with a good layer of blasting powder on top," Randal announced.

"I'll be danged!" exclaimed Dawson. "The gun flash set off the powder! Who gave you that idea?"

"You!" Randal said. "When you told me how they blasted Pick Manton's padlocks off with gunfire. I just figured they'd do the same thing again."

"A mite crafty," Slim added. "Say, give me a gun, Randal—it'll be a pleasure toting these birds to jail personally."

Randal smiled sourly. "You won't need the gun, Slim, 'cause you'll be right in there with 'em!"

"You're loco, Randal! You just said I helped you, that it was my story about Pick Manton that . . ."

"Right," cut in Randal. "A story you knew too well. How else could you know El Lobo blasted those padlocks with bullets . . . if you weren't right there with him when it was done!"

**H**E shoved Dawson over with El Lobo and the gang, then turned back to Nugget Jones. "This coyote double-crossed all of us, planned to split with El Lobo. So I told him of my plan deliberately. El Lobo would think Dawson was very clever, believing that he knew our plan, and would completely overlook the real trick!"

"What was that?" asked Nugget.

Randal smiled. "Making El Lobo bite twice on the same trick!"

"Only this time loaded for the payoff, eh?" Jones guffawed. "And our gold—that's safe?"

"Safe as a baby, stashed away right there in my case of blasting powder," smiled Randal. "I just kinda reversed things a bit."

THE END

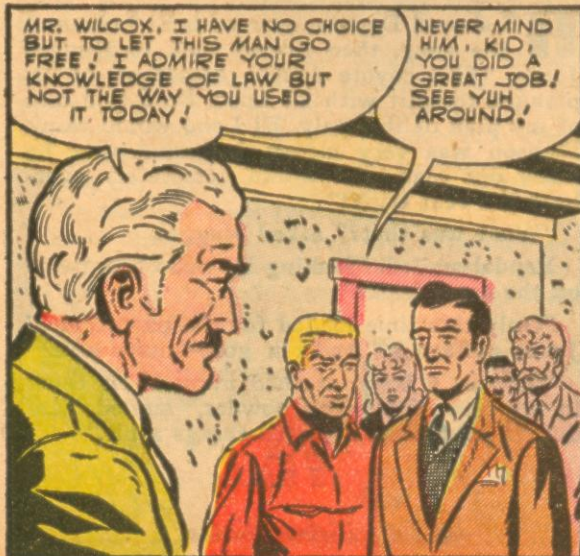
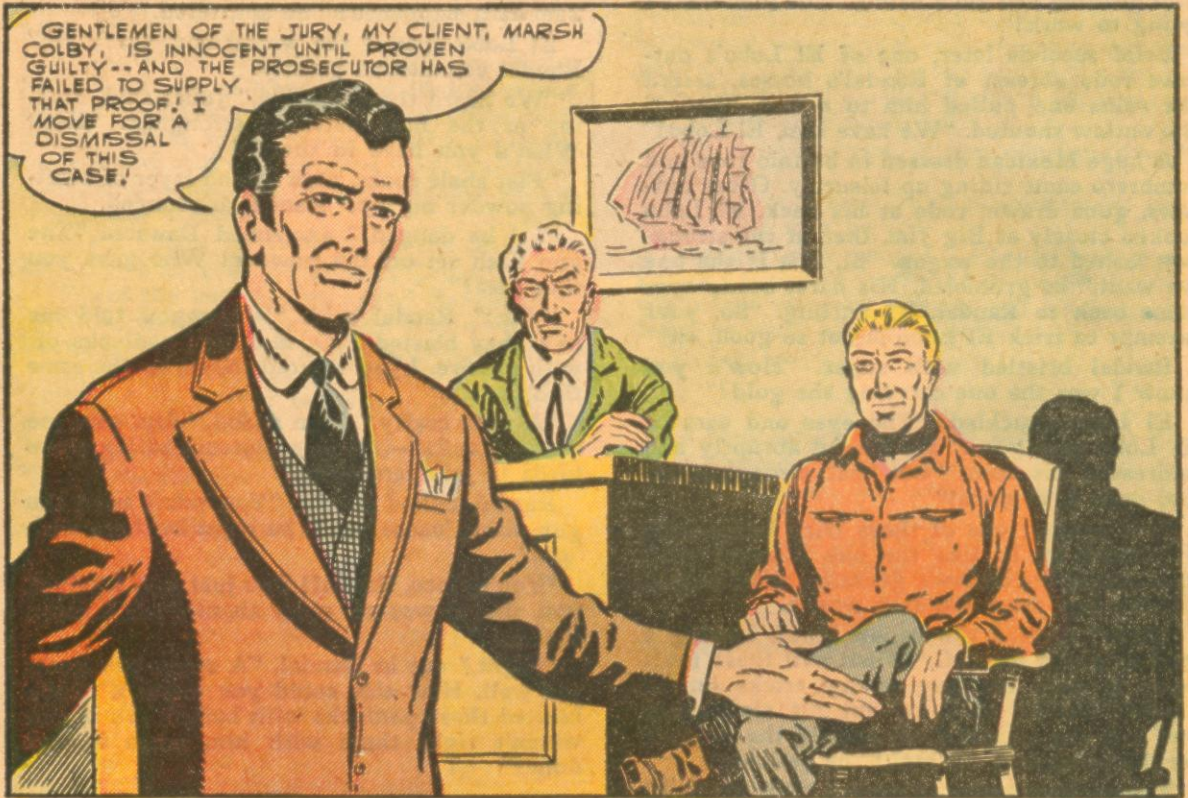


# MASKED RAIDER

## MASKED RAIDER

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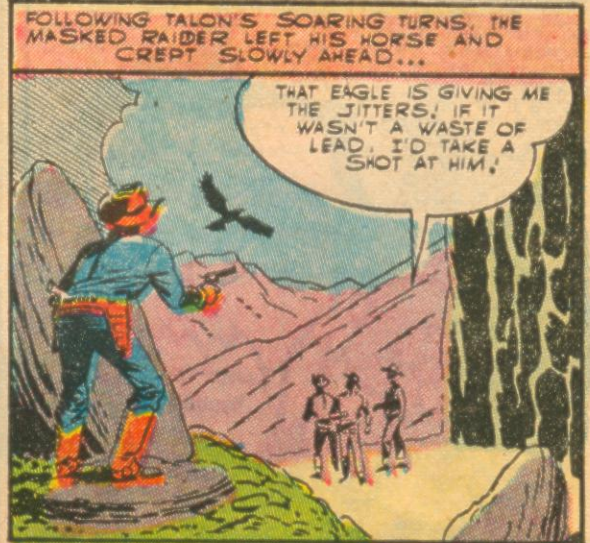


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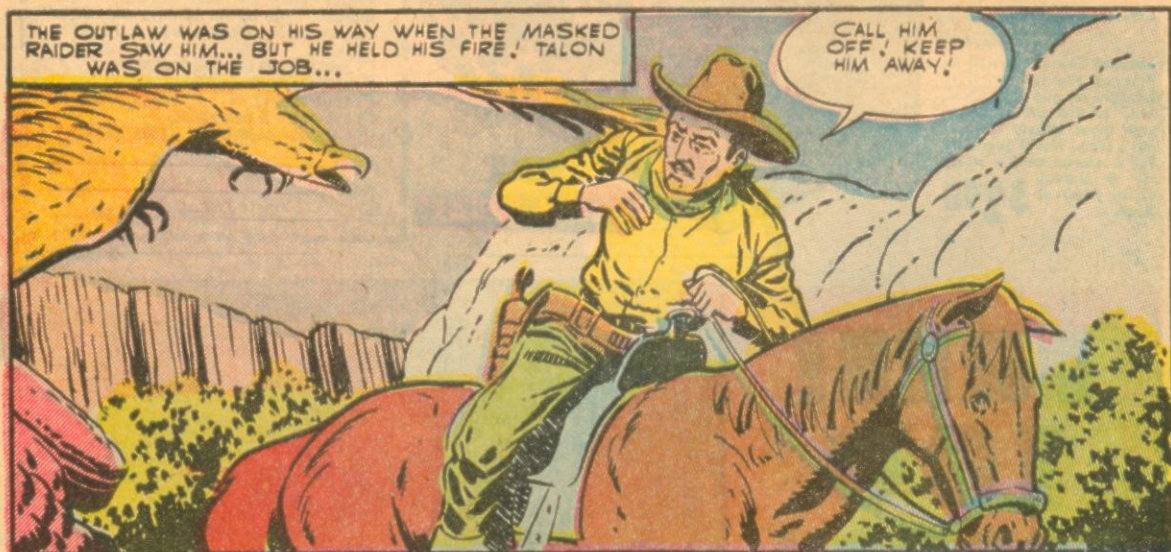
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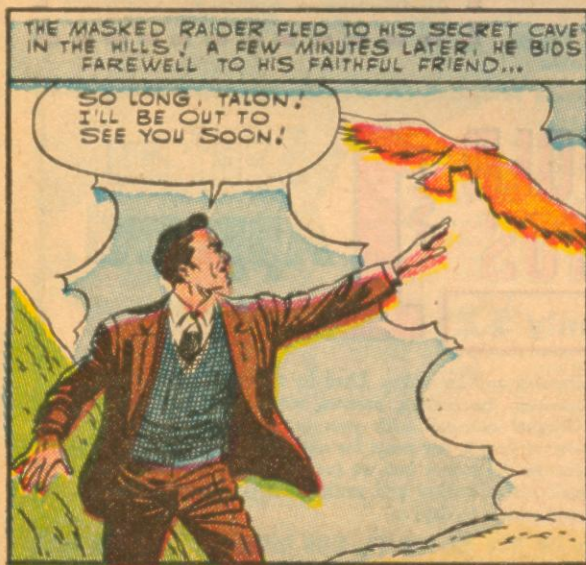
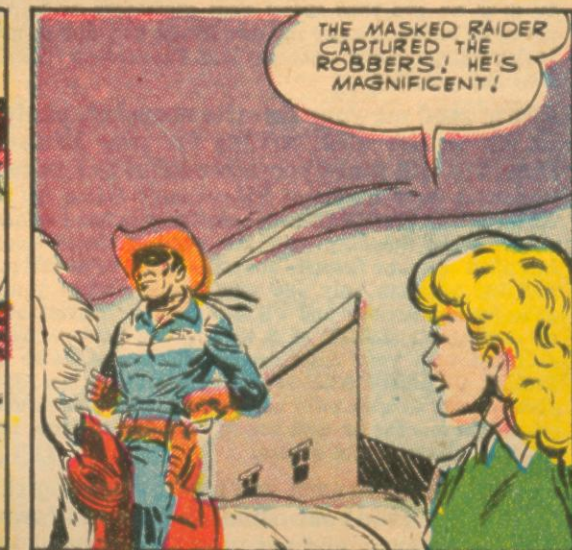
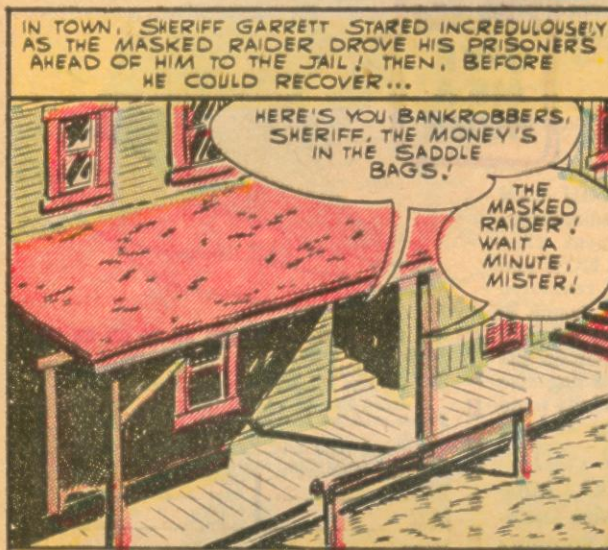
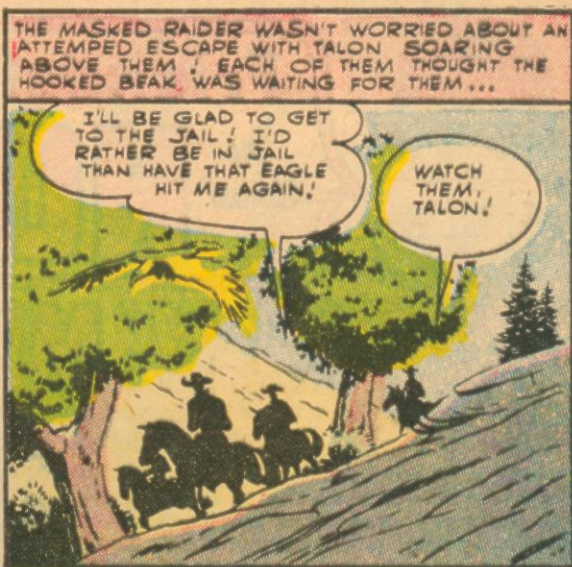


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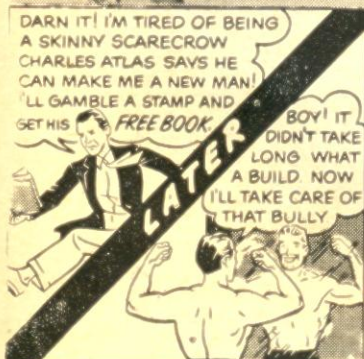
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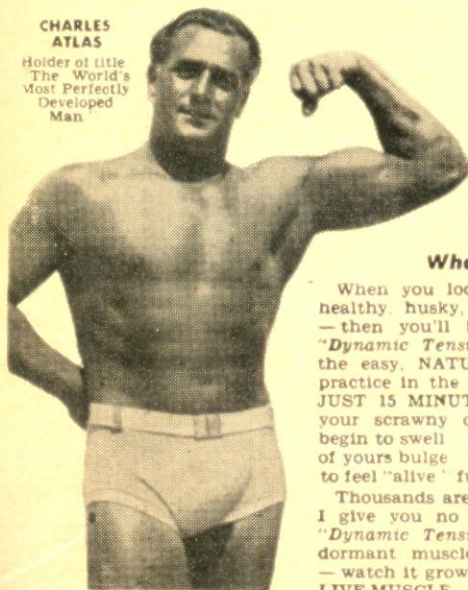
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